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ABSTRACT

In 1991, the first data-based analysis of the condition of public education was published, countering a prevalent view that the U.S. education system was verging on collapse. Subsequent reports followed, seven of which appear here. The reports contend that schools are about as effective as they have even been--although the population they serve has become harder to educate. Drawing on achievement test scores, international comparisons, how schools compare to other social institutions, and international competitiveness, the text shows how U.S. schools are holding their own. It explores media reports and the decided role that politics plays when discussing educational reform. Each of the reports here draws on extensive data, which are then used to explore the conditions of schools in the United States. For example, it scrutinizes claims that falling SAT scores indicate the poor condition of education and it shows that the purported decline in scores is misleading. The text also looks at the effects of poverty on education, the results of inequitable school financing, and the frequency of negative reports about schools, many of which, it claims, are not based in fact. (RJM)

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